

Review of art and society until 1970s

Contexts for Art Since 1945

Cultural and Social Contexts:

WW II (the bomb and Holocaust)

US becomes Intellectual and Economic Center of world.

Economic growth in the US

Rampant Consumerism

Social Protest— Civil Rights, Vietnam War, Feminist Movement

Social and Economic Disparity

Art Historic Contexts:

Growth of gallery system

AE provided two directions

Rauschenberg and Johns brought art and life together with revival of Duchamp

Warhol depersonalized art using commercial production processes and media images

Minimal artists

Anti-commodity

Artist important. Viewer important.

Marxist Ideas about power.

Review of art and society until 1970s

Contexts for Art Since 1945

Art Movements before WWII:

Realism

Impressionism

Cubism

Dada

Surrealism

Mexican Social Realists

Art Movements after the war:

Abstract Expressionism— The New York School

Pre-Pop (or Neo Dada)

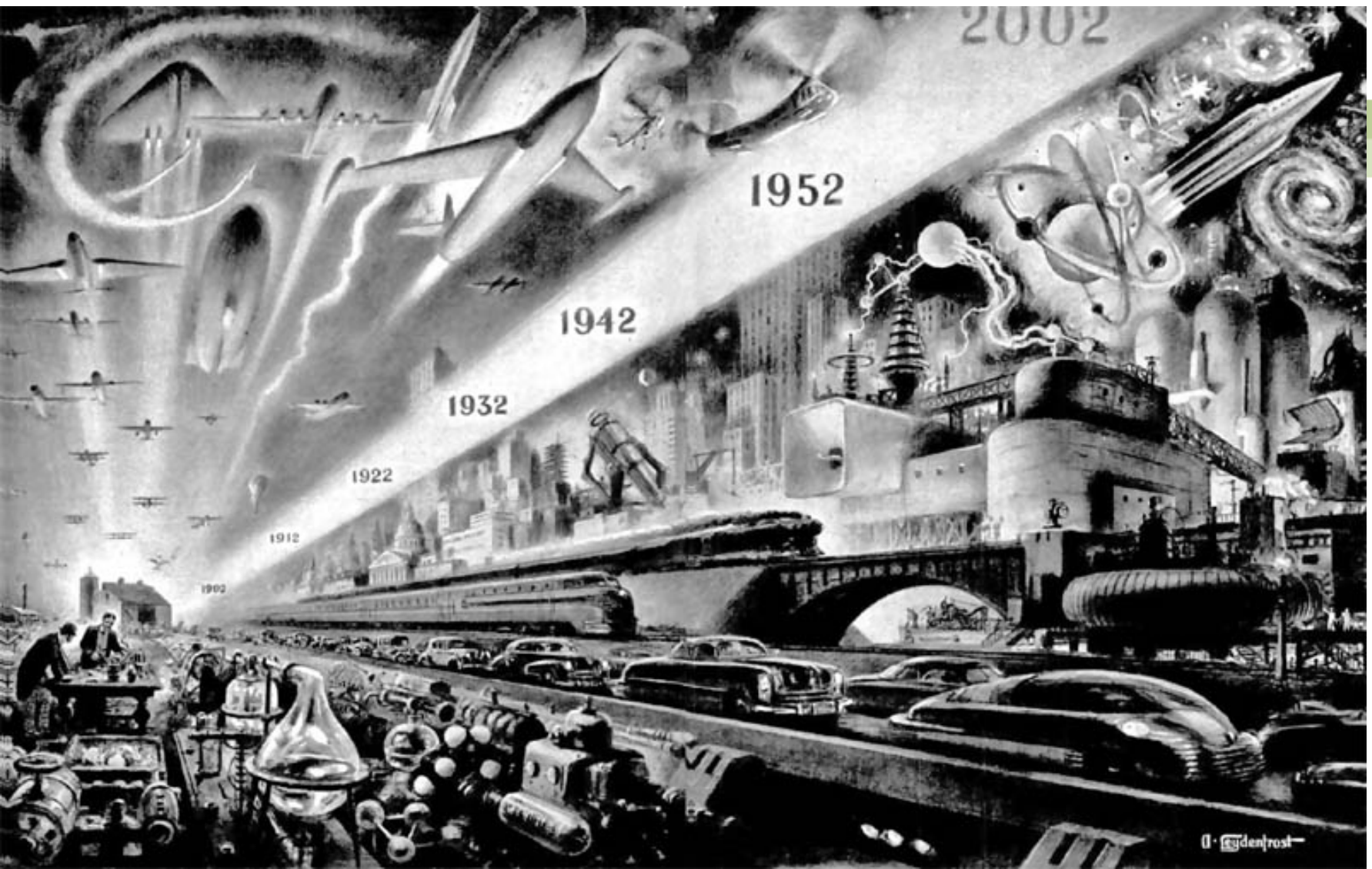
Pop

Minimalism & Post Minimal directions

Land Art

Conceptual Art

Performance Art



Going back in time to right after WWII in America, this was a Modernist view of Progress as seen in 1952.

It was imagined technology and industry would create a utopian world.

But... by the mid to late 1960s a different reality was manifesting.

1960s—U.S. escalates involvement in Vietnam

1963 --President John Kennedy is assassinated.

1964--Civil Rights protests lead to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, barring discrimination on the basis of race and sex.

--Martin Luther King wins Nobel Peace Prize

--Malcolm X shot to death

--Bob Dylan becomes more popular in this time of social protest.

1966 --The National Organization for Women (NOW)

1968— --American Soldiers massacre 347 civilians at My Lai in Vietnam.

1968--Martin Luther King assassinated (April 4).

--Robert Kennedy assassinated (June 6).

1969--Stonewall riot in NY marks the beginning of the Gay Rights Movement.

1970--US invades Cambodia.

-- Four college students killed at Kent State University



Poster protesting Mai Lai massacre-- US soldiers kill civilians, Vietnam.

Robert Kennedy assassination.



Last class we talked about Minimalism



Artists like Richard Serra began creating large scale sculptures from industrial materials, using industrial processes.

These pieces were designed to be experienced.
The viewer walked through them.
Feeling the space, the materials, the form in Real Time & Real Space.



We talked about ways Minimalism influenced Maya Lin



MAYA YING LIN, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, D.C., 1981–1983. Black granite, each wing 246' long.

In the 1960s & 70s these movements emerged in art
all departing from Minimal ideas:

Land Art (Environmental Art)

Site Specific Art

Conceptual Art

They all consist of artists working
outside the gallery.

It is considered anti-commodity art.
The art is about Ideas.

In this lecture we will look at artists working with art as idea
taking that into the gallery and outside into nature,
questioning what is the actual art and who is the artist.

Think about the anti-commodity leanings of Pop. Then think
about Minimalism. Then we put it together with current
events.



**Main Artists: Richard
Long, Robert Smithson,
Walter deMaria, Joseph
Kosuth & Sol LeWitt,**

Ideas of progress of the 50s yielded to –

The Environmental Movement In the 1970s

Some important dates leading to the
Environmental Movement

1962 *Silent Spring* by aquatic biologist Rachel Carson exposes the harm caused by insecticides such as DDT. The book leads to the development of safer insecticides and to a ban on the sale of DDT within the United States. More significantly, it heightens the awareness of ordinary people, who demand new legislation aimed at protecting the environment.

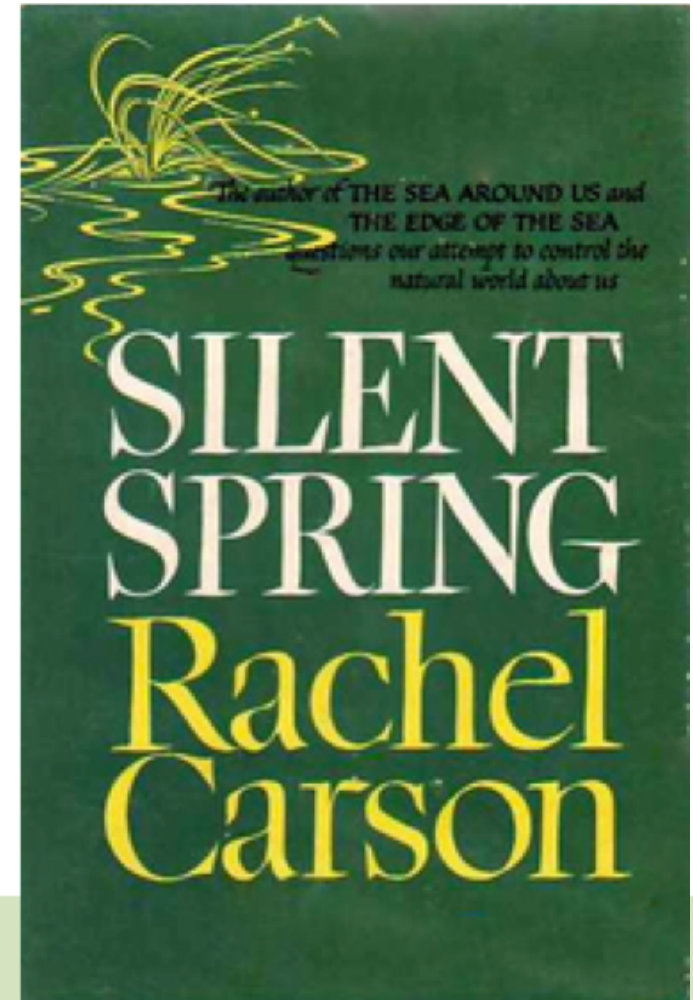
1964 The Wilderness Preservation Act.

1966 The Endangered Species Preservation Act

1967 Environmental Defense Fund established

1970 Environmental Protection Agency formed
Clean Air Act

1971 Greenpeace founded



Land Art emerged in the 1960s, coinciding with a growing ecology movement in the United States, which asked people to become more aware of the negative impact they can have on the natural environment.



Walter deMaria, Lightning Field

- In US artists trained in Minimalist principles shared their concerns with organic transformations and the interrelations of landscape and history.
- Land art took art out of the gallery or museum and into the natural landscape.
- Artists produced huge works engaging elements of the environment, sometimes in remote locations.



Richard Long— took long walks as his principle medium. Then began arranging elements in the landscape, sometimes bringing them back into the gallery or museum.

One of a number of British ‘land’ artists where the relationship with the land contains a more spiritual bent.

Taking long walks in nature, as a reverent encounter.



In 1967, when he was 18, **Richard Long** made a sculpture by the simple act of walking.

Key to Land Art, his work is ‘simple creative acts of walking and marking about place, locality, time, distance and measurement’.

All this is brought to the gallery in the form of photographs, text, sculptures and mud works on the walls.

This piece uses mud from the area he was walking.

He said: *“In the nature of things: Art about mobility, lightness and freedom. Simple creative acts of walking and marking about place, locality, time, distance and measurement. Works using raw materials and my human scale in the reality of landscapes.”*

Day Fifty Richard Long (1945 -) Chicago Mud Circle, 2010





Robert Smithson's monumental earthwork *Spiral Jetty* (1970) is located on the Great Salt Lake in Utah. Using black basalt rocks and earth from the site, the artist created a coil 1,500 feet long and 15 feet wide that stretches out counter-clockwise into the translucent red water. *Spiral Jetty* was acquired by Dia Art Foundation as a gift from the Estate of the artist in 1999.

<http://www.diaart.org/sites/page/59/1380>



Spiral Jetty is made with earth moving equipment out of the Black rock, salt crystals, earth, red water (algae) existing in the Great Salt Lake, Utah.

A bulldozer can drive on it.

It is 1,500' x 15' x 3 1/2'.

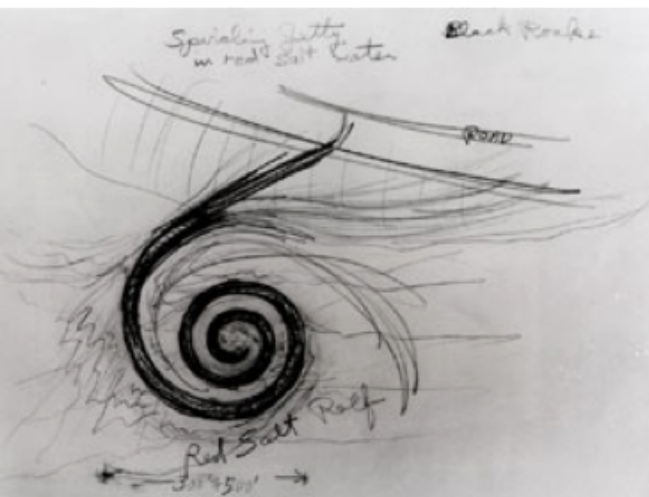


Smithson was very interested in entropy...the principle whereby ordered systems undergo exponential deterioration or unraveling.

Built in a remote area of the Great Salt Lake, few people ever see it. However, the site was chosen because of the remoteness and the particular type of algae. For this reason it is considered site-specific. Chosen for that site or place.

He was interested in the relationship between the formation and life of the works, all made and then left to nature to dissolve or transform.

He knew eventually the water of the Great Salt Lake would raise and cover the Jetty, For several years it was covered with salt.



Other interests were:
Primordial Shapes
Memory
Scale
Entropy
Chance
Materials
Sites



”Following the spiral steps we return to our origins, back to some pulpy protoplasm...My eyes became combustion chambers...the sun vomited its corpuscular radiations.”...

“words and rocks contain a language that follows a syntax of splits and ruptures. Look at any word long enough and you will see it open up into a sea of faults, into a terrain of particles.”

Robert Smithson

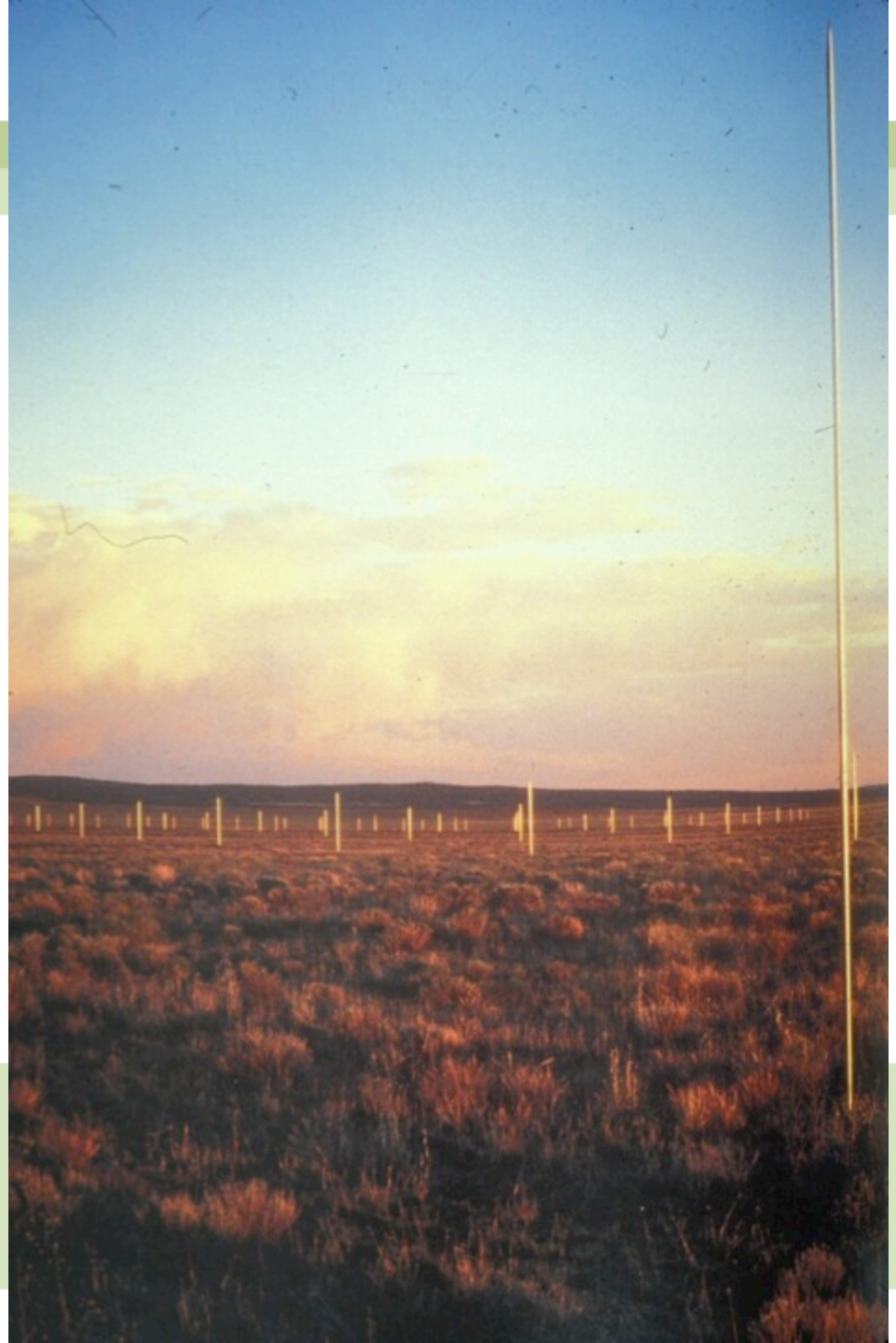


Another land artist was:

Walter de Maria– who was interested in systems of ordering and measurement rather than geological time.

His piece, **Lightening Field** is also **site-specific** in that it is constructed in a flat semi-arid basin in southern NM, a place known for lightening. It consists of a 1 mile by 1 kilometer grid of 400 stainless steel poles, arranged in 16 rows of 25, 220 feet apart, The poles, 2” in diameter are about 20 ft 7.5 in tall set so the tops are level despite variations in the landscape.

Lightening Field, 71-77



Lightening Field is built in an area already known for lightening. But the steel poles then attract even more. Built in a remote area, the piece can not be bought or sold. But it can be experienced as people are able to rent cabins.



Michael Heizer's *Double Negative* (1969) comprises two giant rectangular cuts (and the space in between them) in the irregular cliff edges of a tall desert mesa near Overton, Nevada.

The work is nothing— it is where something, the earth, was removed.

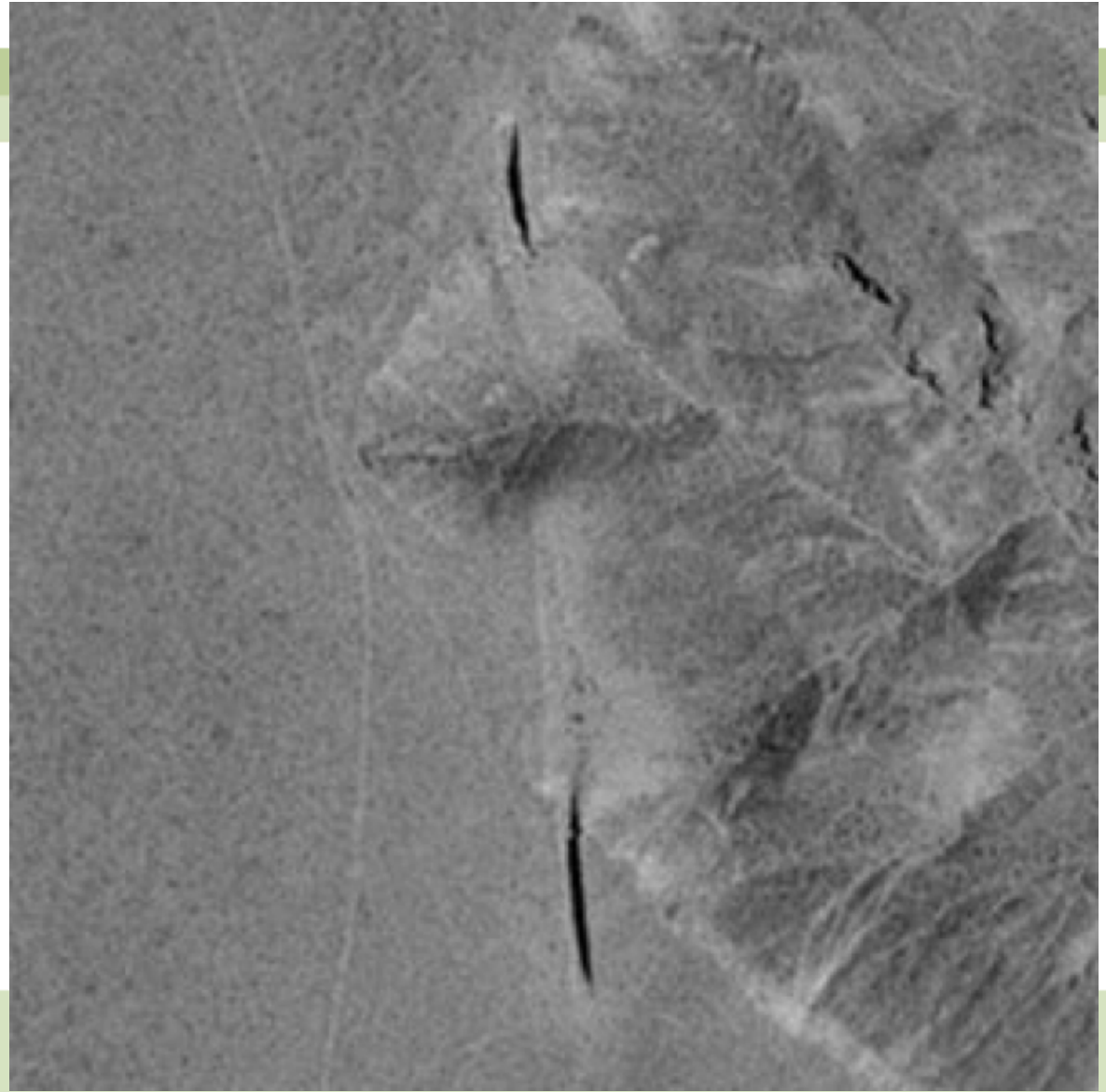


Heizer's *Double Negative*
Viewed from the air.

Facing each other in the cliffs on either side of a wide cleft in the mesa, the cuts define rectilinear spaces from which bulldozers have removed the sandstone strata and rock.

Large enough to absorb the Empire State Building lying on its side, this piece has been compared to the monumental earthen architecture of ancient times, as much as to sculpture.

Heizer's work constitutes another challenge to sculpture's long history.



"There is nothing there, yet it is still a sculpture." -Michael



Heizer continued to create sculptures based on this idea that what we are seeing is really nothing. These large-scale shapes do not stand above the floor but rather are set into the floor— they are deep holes that are very scary to walk near.



Michael Heizer, *North, East, South, West*—1967-2002, Concrete and Steel. Dia Foundation Beacon, NY

“It is interesting to build a sculpture that attempts to create an atmosphere of awe. Small works are said to do this but it is not my experience. Immense, architecturally sized sculpture creates both the object and the atmosphere. Awe is a state of mind equivalent to religious experience, I think if people feel commitment they feel something has been transcended. . . . I think that large sculptures produced in the '60s and '70s by a number of artists were reminiscent of the time when societies were committed to the construction of massive, significant works of art.”

Quote by Heizer



Creating interventions in the land date back to prehistoric art. In the US, Native people created mounds and sculptures made into the earth. Our Contemporary land artists were departing from Minimalism but also knew about these prehistoric precedents.

This is a photo of -- *Serpent Mound*, built in Ohio, ca. 1070 CE. 1200' long, 20' wide, 5' high by an early Native American people.

Let's look at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in this light.

While most memorials at this time were figurative (they included heroic images of people), Lin imagined the construction of the monument quite literally as a cut into the earth, a metaphorical wound in the nation's landscape, with the potentiality to heal through the monument's resurrection.

We might also say it is site-specific in that it is situated to point to the Washington Monument on one end and the Lincoln Memorial on the other.

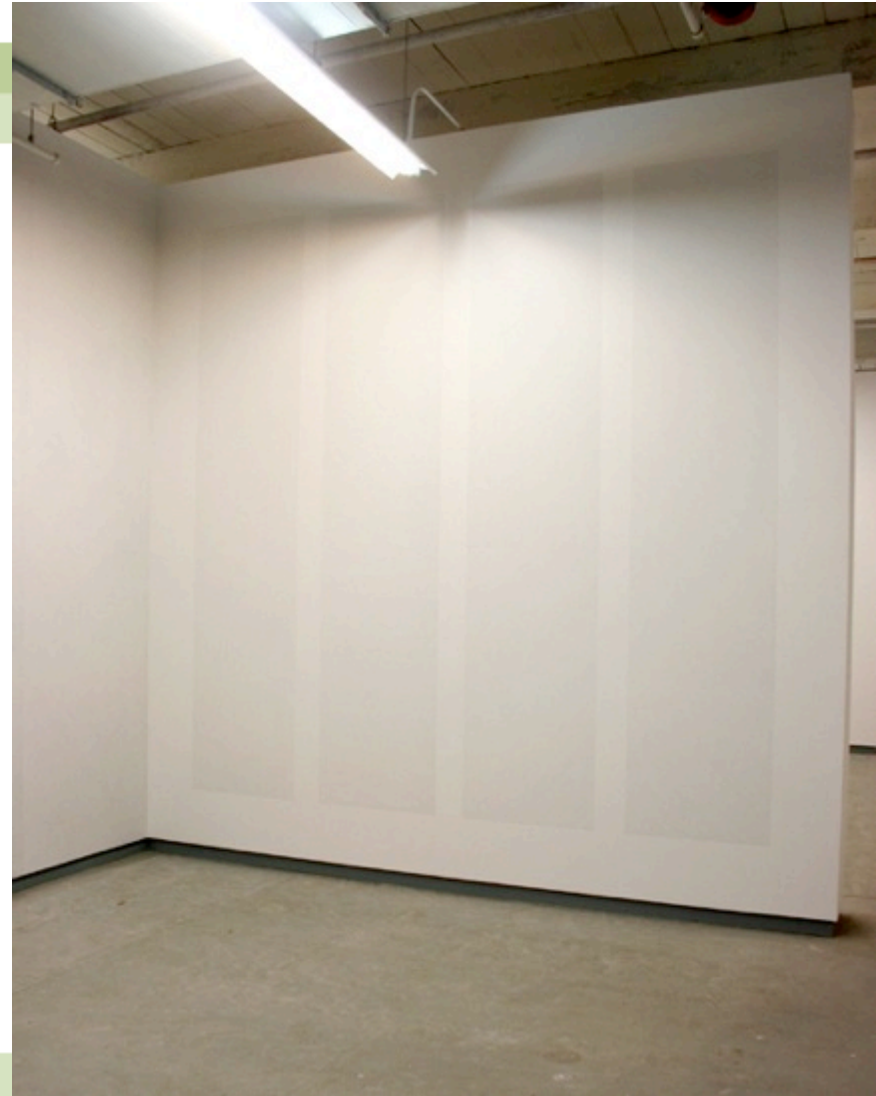


CONCEPTUAL ART

In the late 1960s, artists in the US, Europe, and Latin America began experimenting with art that emphasized ideas instead of a physical product.

In 1967 artist Sol LeWitt gave this new art a name in his essay “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art.” He wrote, “The idea itself, even if it is not made visual, is as much of a work of art as any finished product.”

Conceptual artists used their work to question the notion of what art is, and often rejected museums and galleries as defining authorities. The work of Conceptual artists helped to put photographs, musical scores, architectural drawings, and performance art on an equal footing with painting and sculpture.



Wall drawing by Sol LeWitt.

From MoMA website.

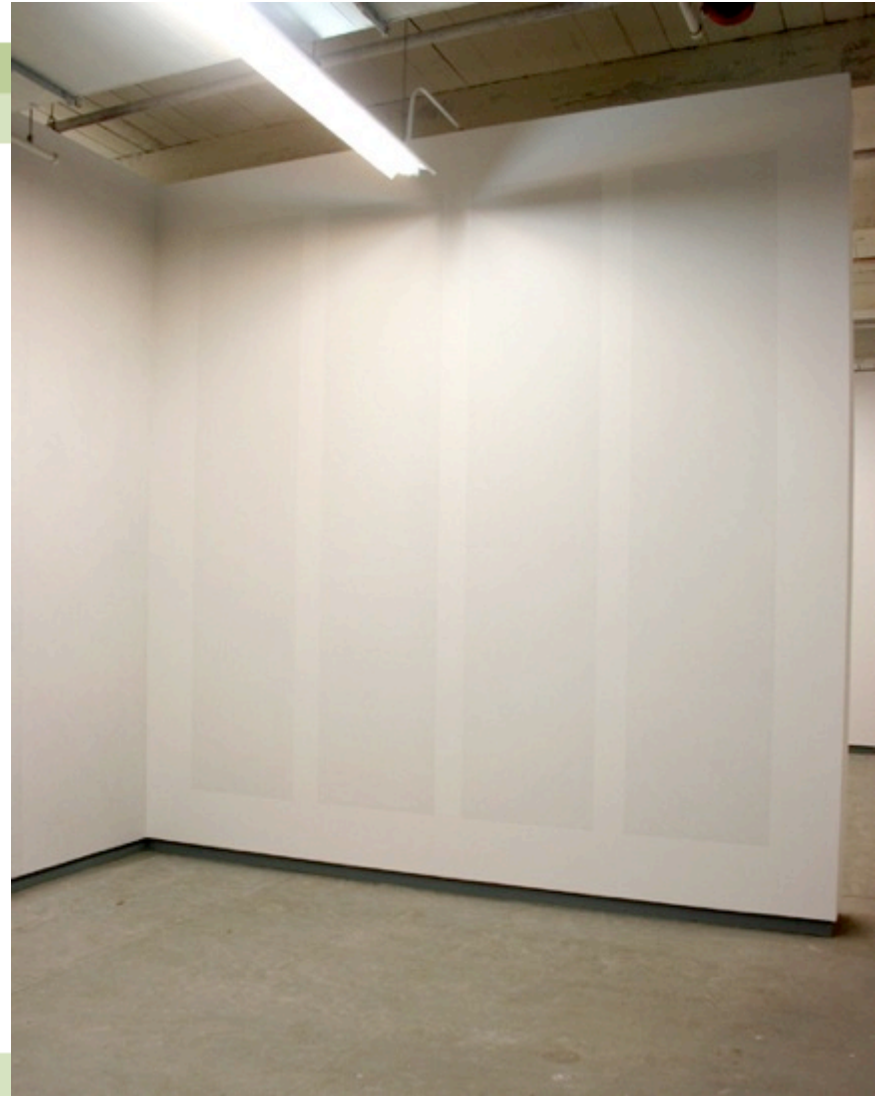
Read more about conceptual Art on the MoMA site.

http://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/themes/conceptual-art

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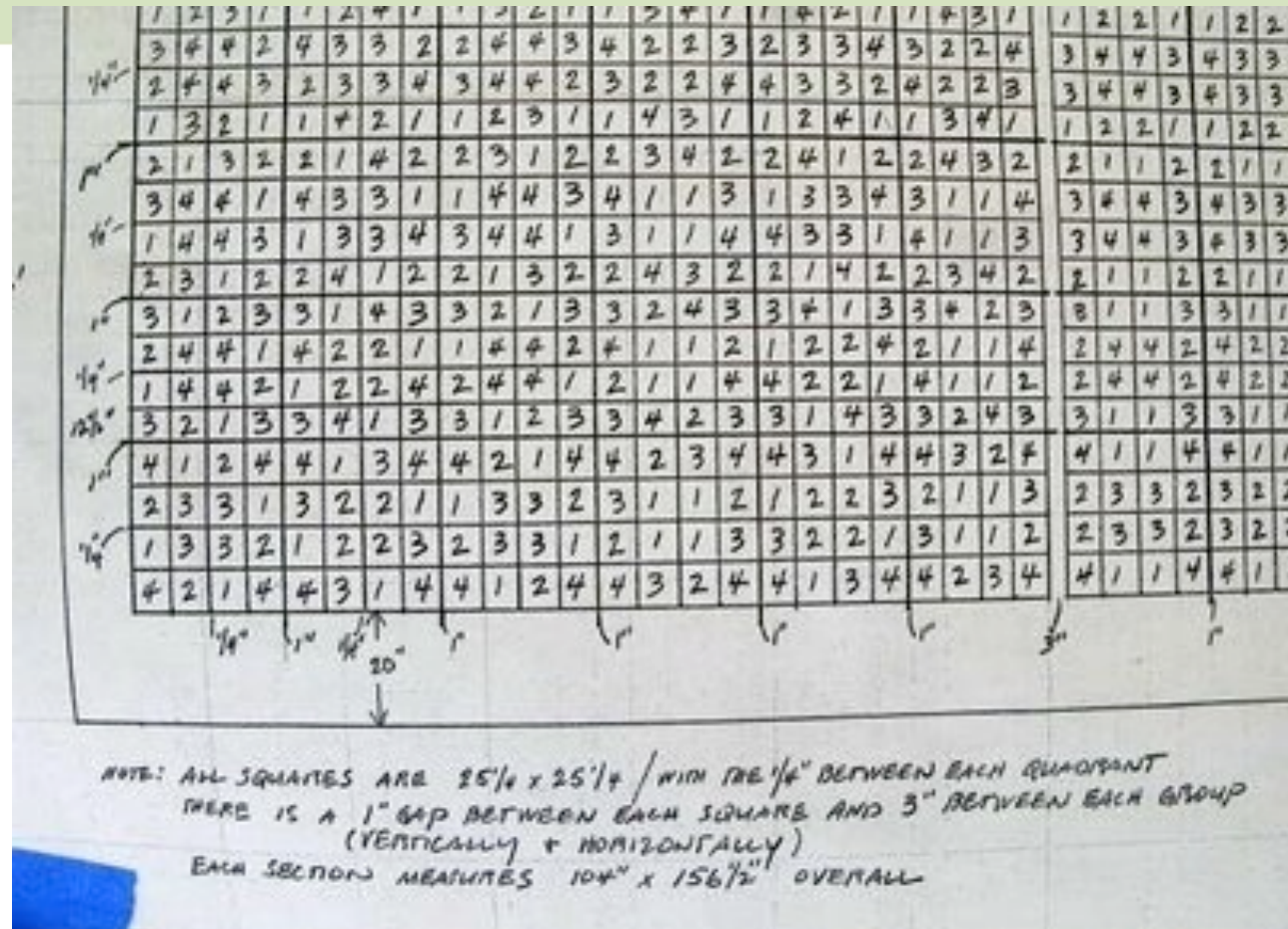
Wall drawing by Sol LeWitt.

Conceptual Art—The idea is the important thing. Artist doesn't even have to make it. On this work, Le Witt produced instructions for a drawing that could be done by anyone.

Sol LeWitt—this is what he gave the gallery or museum exhibiting the work— a set of written instructions & this drawing.

WORK FROM INSTRUCTIONS
(1971):

USING A BLACK, HARD CRAYON DRAW A TWENTY INCH SQUARE. DIVIDE THIS SQUARE INTO ONE INCH SQUARES. WITHIN EACH ONE INCH SQUARE, DRAW NOTHING, OR DRAW A DIAGONAL STRAIGHT LINE FROM CORNER TO CORNER OR TWO CROSSING STRAIGHT LINES DIAGONALLY FROM CORNER TO CORNER.



Sol LeWitt--one of the first practitioners of Conceptual art with articles written in 1967 and '69 with statements such as..."The idea becomes a machine that makes the art".

The artist has the idea for the work but doesn't have to make it.

LeWitt, *Wall Drawings*

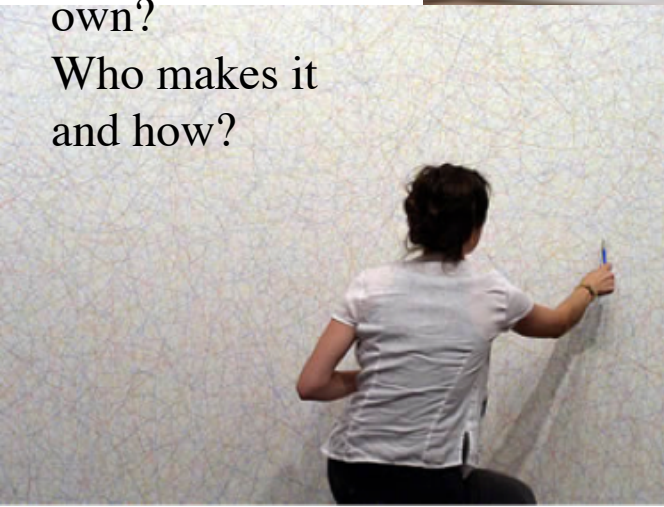
We see the abandonment of control.

The use of pragmatic systems to undermine rationality

And a shift in power

Who owns it and what do they own?

Who makes it and how?



Wall drawing #1---instructions for how to reproduce it...anyone could do it– not just the artist.

Duchamp invented the Readymade and with it demonstrated how art dependent entirely upon context for meaning could articulate a language other than form and still deliver a potent message.

Joseph Kosuth

This piece, *One and Three Chairs* is a real chair, a photo of a chair and the dictionary definition of a chair. His point is that we call any of these things a “chair” but they have nothing to do with each other.

The actual chair is 3-dimensional and can be actually sat on. It occupies space. But the photo and the text are flat, 2-dimensional. In addition, the dictionary definition is words that reference the chair, but are not the chair and actually, nothing like the chair.



Joseph Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs* is influenced by Roland Barthes, “Elements of Semiology” published in English in 1967. Barthes adapted de Saussure, linguistic theories, in language the relation between ‘signifier’ (word or sound) and ‘signified’ (the thing to which it refers) is fundamentally arbitrary. Meaning is constituted via a shuffling of available linguistic components...no sense is innate in things, but rather constructed. (we know what a ‘cat’ is because it differs from ‘bat’...

This understanding means that meaning can be permeated by changing ideologies.

Though text had been used in art long before this, artists like Joseph Kosuth were among the first to give words such a central role.

The way the words look plays a role in Conceptual art, but it is language itself that has the ultimate significance.



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This understanding means that meaning can be permeated by changing ideas.

Language was an important tool for Conceptual artists in the 1960s.

Many Conceptual artists used language in place of brush and canvas, and words played a primary role in their emphasis on ideas over visual forms.

Observation of the conditions under which misreadings occur gives rise to a doubt which I should not like to leave unmentioned, because it can, I think, become the starting-point for a fruitful investigation. Everyone knows how frequently the reader finds that in reading aloud his attention wanders from the text and turns to his own thoughts. As a result of this digression on the part of his attention he is often unable, if interrupted and questioned, to give any account of what he has read. He has read, as it were, automatically, but almost always correctly.

Joseph Kosuth, Conceptual Art, his interest is in Language and Representation

Influenced by study of linguistics in particular Joseph Wittgenstein and Roland Barthes.

Next class we will discuss:

Performance Art & Feminist Art

Each with references to previous art and ideas and fueled by current events.

JUDY CHICAGO, The Dinner Party, 1979.

Multimedia, including ceramics and stitchery, 48' x 48' x 48' installed.



Marina Abramovic, performance involving her removing the meat and blood from bones. A metaphoric act for the ethnic cleansing that took place in Bosnia.